DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 922 FL 014 077

AUTHOR Ramsay, Janet K.
TITLE Assessing Instructional Needs with Language Experience Stories.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Summer Meeting of the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (5th, Toronto, Ontario, July 21-23, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *English (Second Language); *Error Patterns; Form Classes (Languages); *Language Experience Approach; Language of Instruction; Oral Language; *Second Language Learning
IDENTIFIERS Botswana

ABSTRACT

The level of mastery of selected language forms among English as a second language students in Botswana was investigated. Eighty-four pupils in the third to the sixth year of formal education provided oral English samples in unstructured formats involving language experience stories. The oral language of the pupils was analyzed to establish the sequence in which certain English features were learned. Most stories produced by the younger pupils consisted of naming objects in the picture, while the older students added content from other classes. The contracted copula and possessives did not regularly occur in the pupils' stories. The younger students used articles and pronouns with great frequency. However, the highest frequency of errors was with articles and pronouns. The older students used more prepositions while committing errors of omission of articles, third person errors, and "be" verb and regular past errors. It is concluded that the marked differences between the number of features used by younger and older students implies that when pupils are taught content subjects in Enlgish, their production of English features is more varied. (RW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED236922

ASSESSING INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS WITH LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE STORIES

Janet K. Ramsay

Language experience stories were collected from pupils in Standards 3 - 6 of a primary school in Botswana. These stories were analysed to establish the level of mastery for selected features. The results of the the analysis indicated that although English is taught each year, pupils begin to acquire it only when English becomes the medium of instruction. Aided by the results of this study, goals and content for the English as a Second Language portion of the primary teacher in-service program were established.

FL014077

The 1977 Report of the National Commission on Education, in Botswana, identified primary education as a national priority for improvement and reform. In 1981, the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP), a joint venture between USAID and the Government of Botswana, began to take shape with the arrival of Ohio University personnel. The aim of the project is: to establish at the University of Botswana a Department of Primary Education, which offers both B.Ed. program for future teacher trainers and a Diploma program for prospective educational leaders. The project also organizes and implements with the Ministry of Education an in-service program for teams of educators who will be conducting in-service workshops in their local schools.

Presently, English is taught as a subject during the first four years of primary education while pupils are learning to read and write their mother-tongue (Setswana). In the fifth year, English becomes the medium of instruction for the remaining three years of primary education in Botswana.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Janet K. Ramsay

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Upon arrival in Botswana, the Ohio University team visited a number of primary schools and teacher training colleges. Discussions were held with various educators concerning perceived needs in the area of instructional improvement. In these discussions it was suggested that most primary teachers need to improve their own English. Hamayan (1980) suggests that the teacher's language, the input, affects the pupil production in a bi-lingual classroom. Based on this hypothesis a portion of each in-service workshop should be devoted to language instruction for the teachers. The discussions also emphasized the need for more effective methods, techniques and teaching aids for oral English. (Specific content for future teacher workshops should be based on improving the pupils' oral English.) To determine the current proficiency level and to become acquainted with the pupils' ability in the different standards the focus of this study became centered on the pupil. It is designed to define the content of primary teacher in-service workshops based on pupil competencies.

Subjects

Eighty-four pupils in standards 3 - 6 (3rd - 6th year of formal education) provided language experience stories for this study. The distribution of pupils by standard was: 19 std. 3, 18 std. 4, 24 std. 5 and 23 std. 6 pupils. These pupils attend Mogoditshane Primary School located in a village which is a suburb of Gaborone, the capital of Botswana.
The ages of the pupils ranged from 9 to 16 years. All of the pupils in the study speak Setswana at school and all but 8% use it at home as well.

Method

The pupils' oral English was collected using an unstructured natural communication technique: language experience stories. Pupils were instructed to draw a picture of something that they could tell a story about in English. (Cooper & McNamara, 1978). Discussion of possible picture topics occured before pupils were given paper and crayons. Upon completion of the drawings each pupil dictated his/her story to a researcher. This technique was selelcted for data collection because (1) it could be utlized by class teachers for individual and group needs assessment

(Cooper & McNamara, 1978), (2) the task itself is similar to tasks required of pupils learning English in school, and (3) the variety of English spoken by researcher (American English) was least likely to interfere with the pupil's understanding and production of oral English. The major limitation in the use of this technique is that the production of some structures might be avoided by pupils, but is does provide information about those structures the pupils use regularly and the extent to which those structures have been mastered.

Analysis

The oral language of the pupils was analyzed to establish the sequence that certain English features were learned. This sequence will serve as a basis for guiding instructional improvement by creating an awareness of the sequence and of when it becomes established in the pupils' speech. The group score method (Brown, 1973; Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982) was used to compute the sequence of learning for selected English features. The group score is obtained by assigning 2 points for each obligatory occasion. The actual score is obtained by allotting 2 points to features supplied correctly, 1 point to misformed features and 0 points for features not supplied in obligatory occasions. The actual score for all pupils is added together and divided by the sum of the scores for obligatory occasions. This is multiplied by 100 to yield the group's percentage of accuracy in using each feature.

Features Selected for Study

Pronoun Case	Nominative or accusative case. He is a man. The dog is walking with him.
Plural(s)	Short Plural/s/ and /z/. windows cocks
Articles	a, an and the.
Progressive	-ing in the past, present and future. The wolf was/is/will be eating the sheep. Past
irregular	Main verbs such as: got, went, said. He got honey from the tree.
Past regular	-ed/t/ or /d/ or /id/ of the past regular tense. He lived in a house.
Present indicative	Third person singular noun followed by a main verb. My mother lives in this house.
Plural(es)	Long plural /iz/ houses.

Error frequencies of grammatical constructions were also tallied to determine the most common errors for each group of pupils. Descriptions of the errors to be counted were set according to actual errors occuring in the pupils' language experience stories. (Cooper & McNamara, 1978). Although there was no attempt made to determine the source of such errors in some instances, when errors were discussed with class teachers they indicated that perhaps they themselves do not have a clear understanding of the use of these features The findings from the error frequency count were compared to the competencies established by the sequence of acquisition analysis. This procedure helped establish the pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the usage of oral English and led to the recommendations of content for the primary teacher in-service workshops.

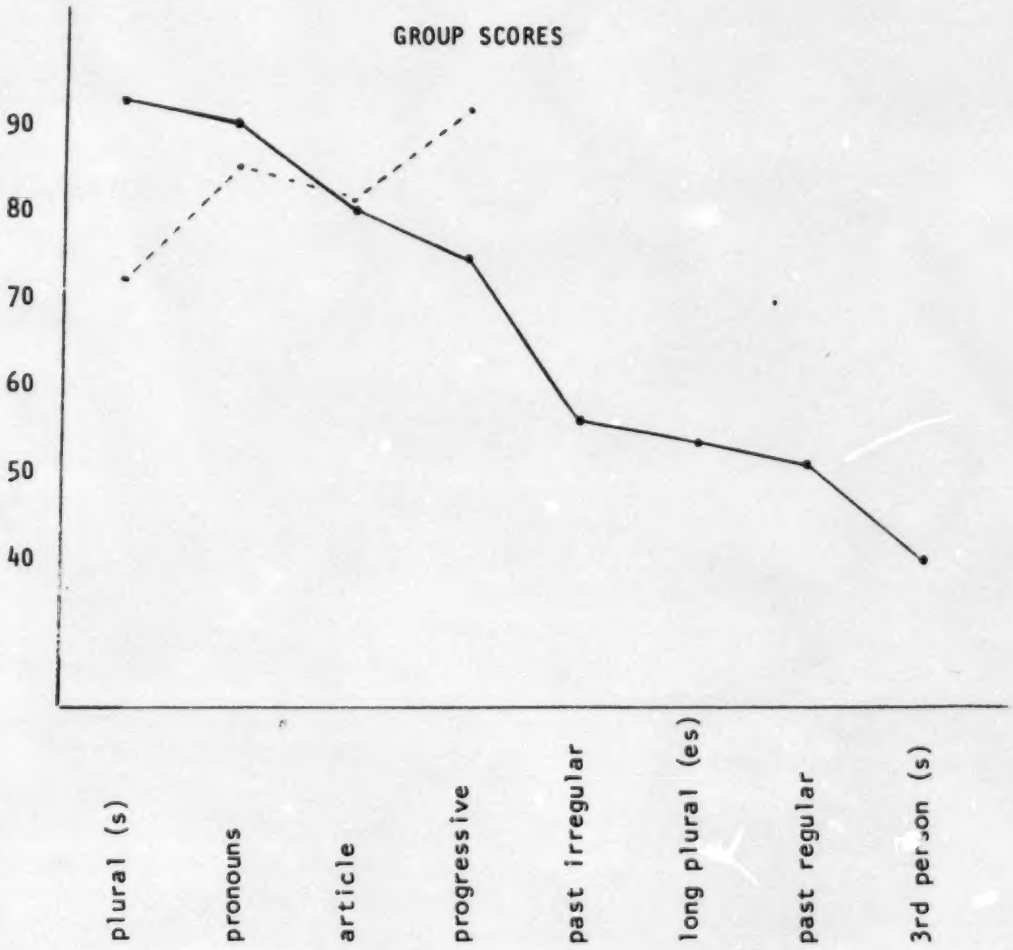
RESULTS

The content of the language experience stories centered primarily on village activities. Most stories produced by Standard 3 and 4 pupils consisted of naming objects in the picture using single words (17 pupils) or the phrases "It is a ..." or "This is a..." A few pupils were able to create a story line based on what they had heard or read recently. Standard 5 and 6 pupils also added content from social studies and science classwork. These four features were used with a high degree of accuracy. Pupils in Standards 5 and 6 regularly used eight of the features in their oral stories. Although the contracted copula (it's, she's) and possessives were counted, they did not regularly occur in the pupils' stories. In an attempt to account for this the English texts (Day by Day English Course, 1963, Longman) and syllabi used in the schools were examined. Possessive noun forms were introduced in the standard 3 syllabus, yet pupils in this study have not incorporated them into their speech. This may be due to the instrument, language experience stories, used in data collection. Ts, onope and Otaala (forthcoming) found, in their structured natural communication study, that it appeared high (3rd) in the sequence of acquisition for Setswana speakers. This discrepancy will have to be examined at a later time.

Upon examination of the English texts it was discovered that the contracted copula form does not appear in the text. It also rarely appears in the speech of Batswana speaking English. Since the pupils have very little contact with this form it is unlikely that it would be incorporated into their speech.

Results

Features	Group Score Std. 3 & 4	Group Score Std. 5 & 6	Rank (Order)
Plural (s)	72.22	93.14	1
Pronouns	85.25	90.53	2
Articles	82.85	81.22	3
Progressive	92.22	75	4
Past irregular		56.66	5
Plural (es)		55.55	6
Past regular		52.86	7
Present indicative		41.12	8



*key

---- denotes Std. 3 and 4

____ denotes Std. 5 and 6

Tsonope (forthcoming) studied the acquisition sequence of English morphemes by 60 Setswana speaking pupils attending Standard 6 in rural schools. The study used a prototype of the Bi-lingual Syntax Measure (Burt, Dulay and Hernandez-Chavez. 1975) to elicit spontaneous speech. Group score and group mean nethods were used to tabulate the results. Group scores of five features, plural(s) pronouns, articles, past regular, and 3rd person(s), held in common by the studies were rank ordered. The correlation, rho=.90 $\rho<.05$ (Spearman), indicates that there is a similarity between the acquisition order of these English features by pupils attending rural and suburban schools in Botswana.

An error frequency count was completed on the original data in order to identify other features that pupils might have difficulty using. The error frequency count done on Standard 3 and 4 stories indicates that although articles and pronouns are accurately used 82% and 85% of the time respectively, the highest frequency of errors was in these categories. The omission of preposition is the most significant new finding of the error frequency count for standard 3 and 4. More prepositions were used in Standard 5 and 6 but incorrect substitutions occurred frequently. Errors most commonly made by Standard 5 and 6 pupils were the omission of articles, 3rd person (s), be verb and regular past (ed). The word 'has' caused some difficulties for pupils. The word 'is' was often substituted for 'has'. Also, the wrong form of the irregular tense was often supplied.

Recommendations

The marked difference between the number of different features used by the lower and upper standard pupils implies that when pupils are taught content subjects in Englisn their production of English feature is more varied. Using English to teach content subjects allows for "the use of language in numerous situations where meaning is more important "(Stevens 1983.:268) than form. To increase the number of features produced by pupils in standard 3 and 4, English lessons could be combined with content area lessons periodically. Many of the topics in the English syllabus are also covered in the content area syllabi.

A few examples of topic overlap follow:

Std. 3

English	Social Studies	Science	Maths
The Radio	Communication		
Colours			Sorting & Classifying
Parts of the Body		Care of the Body	
On a farm - crops	Our District - the lands		
Water	Our District - rainy and dry seasons	Watercycle	Capacity
Clothes			
Games			
Animals		Animals & Wildlife	

Std. 4

English	Social Studies	Science	Maths
Occupations	Local economy		
Calendars - Time	Local Communication	Seasons	Time
Climates & Seasons	Geography of the Community		
Wild Animals & Birds		Animals and Birds	
Games	Culture of the Community		

The Pupils' stories contained a number of patterned sentences. Generally, the pupils' used these rehearsed patterns in appropriate contexts. Rehearsed patterns can be useful in everyday communication, such as greetings and leavings, but the opportunity rarely arises to use "This is a ..." in a communicative situation. Since for many pupils, primary education is the end of formal schooling, it is important for these pupils to be able to communicate in English when they leave Standard 7.

Techniques and activities that will prepare pupils to function in English should be added to the class teachers' repertoire.
The following are possible techniques and activities that could be included in teacher workshops.

Total Physical Response

Simulations of Situations

Puppet dramatizations

Plays

Songs

Listening to stories read aloud

Using pictures for Oral Description

Using Real Life Questioning Techniques

Field Trips

Games - active outdoor games and board games that require oral production

The implementation of these techniques in the classroom may help eliminate some of the errors pinpointed in the error frequency count. It may also be useful to prepare teaching aids and materials to help the teacher with these specific points.

The author would like to thank Joe Tsonope and Iva Zajicek for assisting in data collection and commenting on the final paper.

Allwright, Dick, 1983, Classroom - Centered Research on Language Teaching and Learning: A Brief Historical Overview. *TESOL Quarterly* 17: 191 - 204

Brown, H. Douglas, 1980, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, Inc.

Burt, Marina and Heidi Dulay. 1978. Some Guidelines for the Assessment of Oral Language Proficiency and Dominance. *TESOL Quarterly* 12: 177 - 192.

Cooper, Anita and Lynne McNamara. 1978. Using Students Drawings in Teaching ESL in Elementary School. Paper presented at COTESOL, Denver Oct. 1978.

Day by Day English Course. 1963. Cape Town, S.A: Longman Penguin Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd.

Dulay,Heidi; Marina Burt and Stephen Krashen. 1982. *Language Two.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Dulay, Heidi and Marina Burt. 1974. Natural Sequence in Child Second Language Acquisition. *Language Learning* 24: 37-53.

Gaies, Stephen J. 1983. The Investigation of Classroom Processes. *TESOL Quarterly* 17: 205 - 218.

Hamayan, Else, V., and G. Richard Tucker. 1980. Language Input in the Bilingual Classroom and its Relationship to Second Language Achievement. *TESOL Quarterly* 14: 453 - 468.

Hatch, Evelyn M. (editor) 1978. *Second Language Acquisition. A Book of Readings.* Rowley, Mass., Newbury House Publishers.

Richards, Jack C. (editor). 1974. *Error Analyses: Perceptives on Second Language Acquisition.* London: Longman Group Limited.

Scarcella, Robin C. and Stephen D. Krashen (editors). 1980. *Research in Second Language Acquisition.* Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers.

Stevens, Florence 1983. Activities to Promote Learning and Communication in the Second Language Classroom. *TESOL Quarterly* 17: 259 - 272.

Tarone, Elaine, Merrill Swain and Ann Fathman. 1976. Some Limitations to the Classroom Applications of Current Second Language Acquisition Research. *TESOL Quarterly* 10: 19 - 32.

Tsonope, Joseph. 1983. Acquisition of English Morphemes by Mother-Tongue(L_1) Speakers of Setswana.(forthcoming).

Young, Richard. 1983. The Negotiation of Meaning in Children's Foreign Language Acquisition. *ELT Journal* 37:197 - 206.